

Sept. 2022



Berkeley SafeTREC
SAFE TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

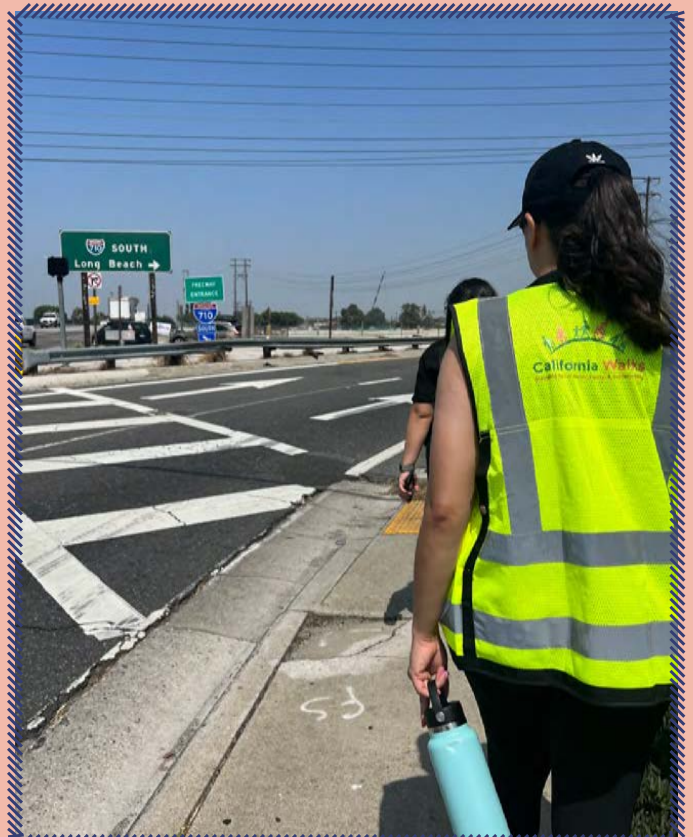


Comunidades Activas y Seguras (Safe and Active Communities), Executive Summary & Recommendations Report for the City of Bell



Comunidades Activas y Seguras
Creating streets that are walkable and bikeable

Funded by a grant from
the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration



City of Bell, CA

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Planning Committee for inviting us into their community and partnering with us to make Bell a safer place to walk and bike. In particular, their contributions prompted meaningfully informed discussions and strengthened the workshop's outcomes. We also want to acknowledge the Tongva and Chumash peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Bell.

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This report was prepared in cooperation with the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of OTS.

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Introduction

Comunidades Activas y Seguras (Active and Safe Communities) is a statewide program of California Walks (Cal Walks) and the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC). This program caters to the needs of monolingual Spanish speakers by providing a culturally sensitive and relevant curriculum that aims to improve walking and biking safety in communities in California.

The training for the City of Bell was collaboratively planned and facilitated by Alta Med Health Services, SELA Health Allies, the Planning Committee, Cal Walks, and SafeTREC to:

1. Develop a Safe Routes to Park plan for the anticipated opening of the new Bell park;
2. Improve connectivity between the new Bell Park and the LA River Trail; and
3. Improve walking and biking safety along East Florence Avenue.

The virtual training was held on August 3, 2022 and convened 45 participants, including AltaMed Health Services, SELA Health Allies, and community residents. It consisted of a:

- Visioning activity where participants imagine an ideal street in their community by drawing or building it using small household items;
- Virtual walking and biking assessment of the community to identify pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns and road user behavior patterns; and
- Radionovela activity where participants use the power of storytelling to create a mini-podcast episode that can be used for continued walking and biking safety advocacy.



Background and Data

The California Office of Traffic Safety Crash Rankings show that, in 2019, the City of Bell ranked 6 out of 94 cities of similar population size for people killed or injured in a traffic crash (with a ranking of “1” indicating the worst). It ranked “13” for pedestrian crashes and “20” for bicycle crashes. Bell ranked 7 out of 94 for speed related crashes, and 2 out of 94 for night time (9:00 pm - 2:59 am) crashes, illustrating both speed and lighting related concerns.

From [Esri Community Analyst](#), in 2021, within the City of Bell, about one fifth, or 22 percent, of households included at least one or more residents with a disability and 15 percent of households did not own a vehicle. The majority of the community, 63 percent, were within the ages of 18 and 65, and 23 percent of the community lived below the poverty level. Many residents relied on public transit, walking, or carpooling to get around the neighborhood even though they feel uncomfortable given safety concerns like speeding drivers, narrow sidewalks, and proximity to highways. Nearly one tenth, 8.9 percent, of the community walked or took public transit to work.

The following data is based on police-reported pedestrian and bicycle crashes resulting in injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists in the City of Bell. Data reported in this section are taken from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) accessed from the Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) as of May 2022.

In the years 2016 to 2020, there were 89 pedestrian crashes resulting in 89 pedestrians injured, including five fatalities and 11 serious injuries. Pedestrian crashes peaked in 2018, and then declined in 2019 and 2020. Pedestrian crashes were concentrated on Florence Avenue (26) and Gage Avenue (24), including the two fatal pedestrian crashes at the Gage Avenue/Otis Avenue and Florence Avenue/Atlantic Avenue intersections. The most commonly cited violation in pedestrian crashes was drivers not yielding the right of way to pedestrians in a marked or unmarked crosswalk, comprising 46 percent of pedestrian crashes violations.

In the years 2016 to 2020, there were 50 bicycle crashes resulting in 50 bicyclists injured. While none of these crashes resulted in a death, three people suffered serious injuries. In 2017, the number of bicycle crashes was the lowest within the five-year period. Similarly to pedestrian crashes, bicycle crashes were concentrated on Gage Avenue (16) and Florence Avenue (9), including a bicycle crash that occurred at the Interstate 710 Northbound on-ramp/Florence Avenue intersection, an area of concern for community members.

Figure 1: Pedestrian Injury Crashes

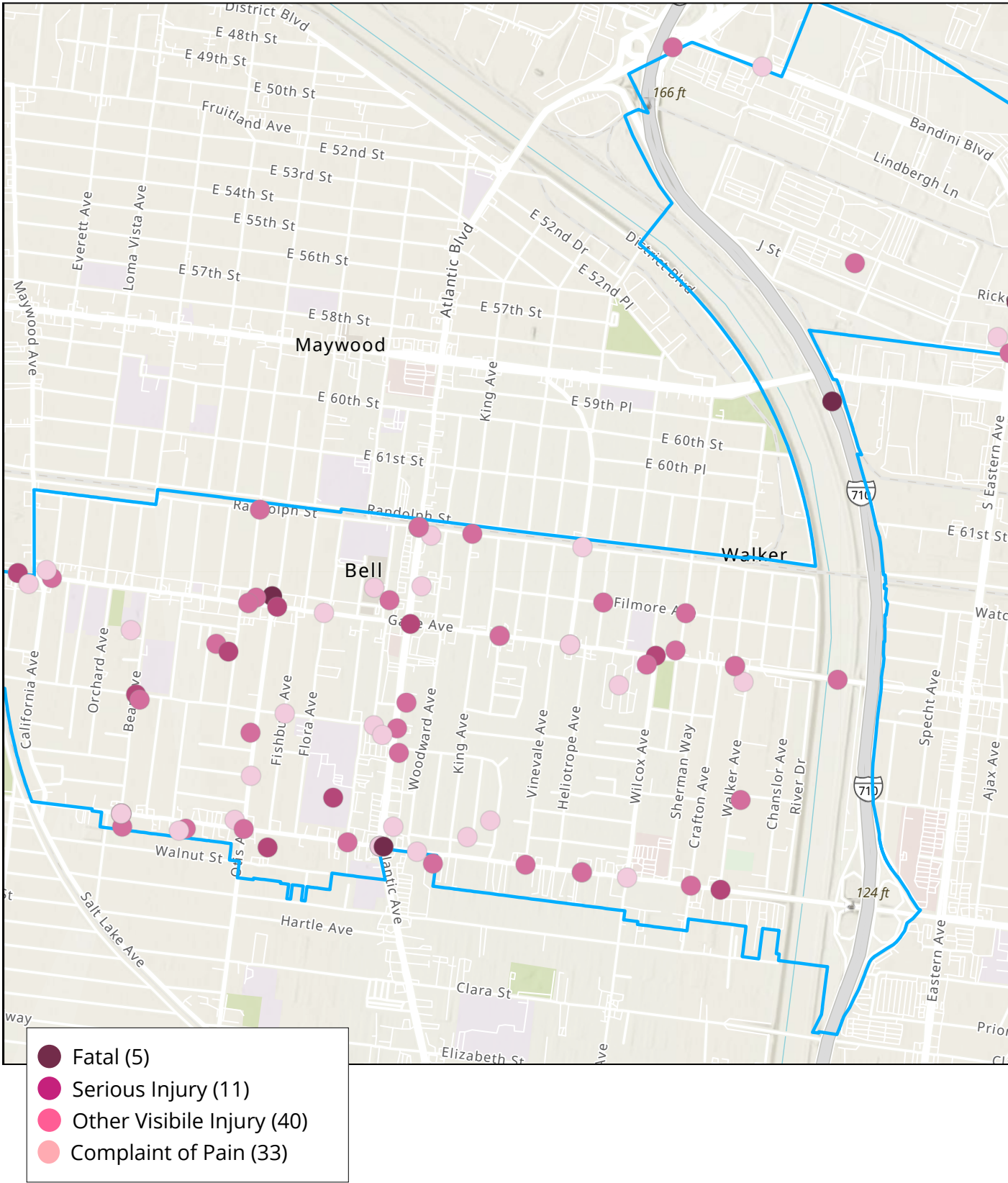
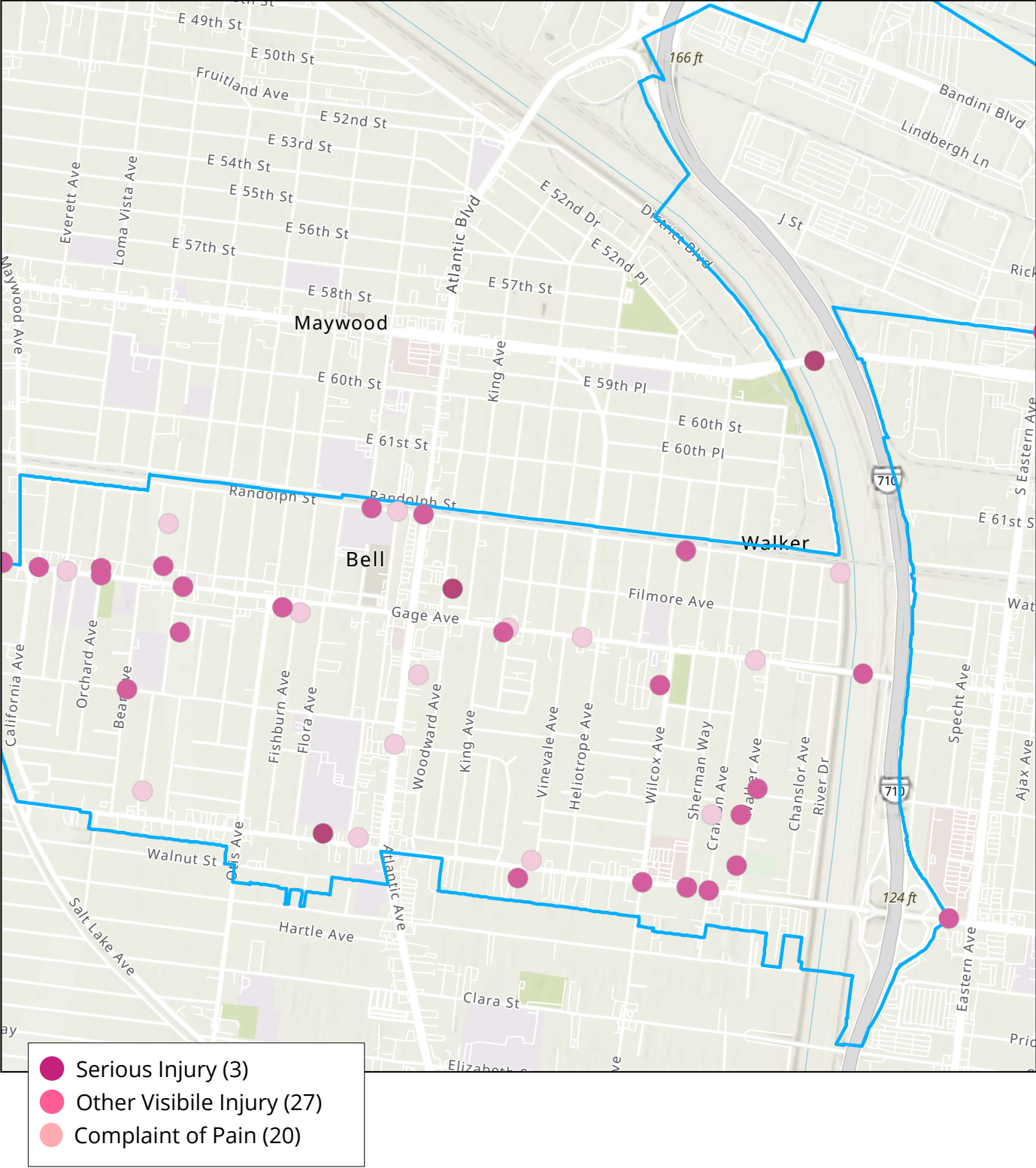


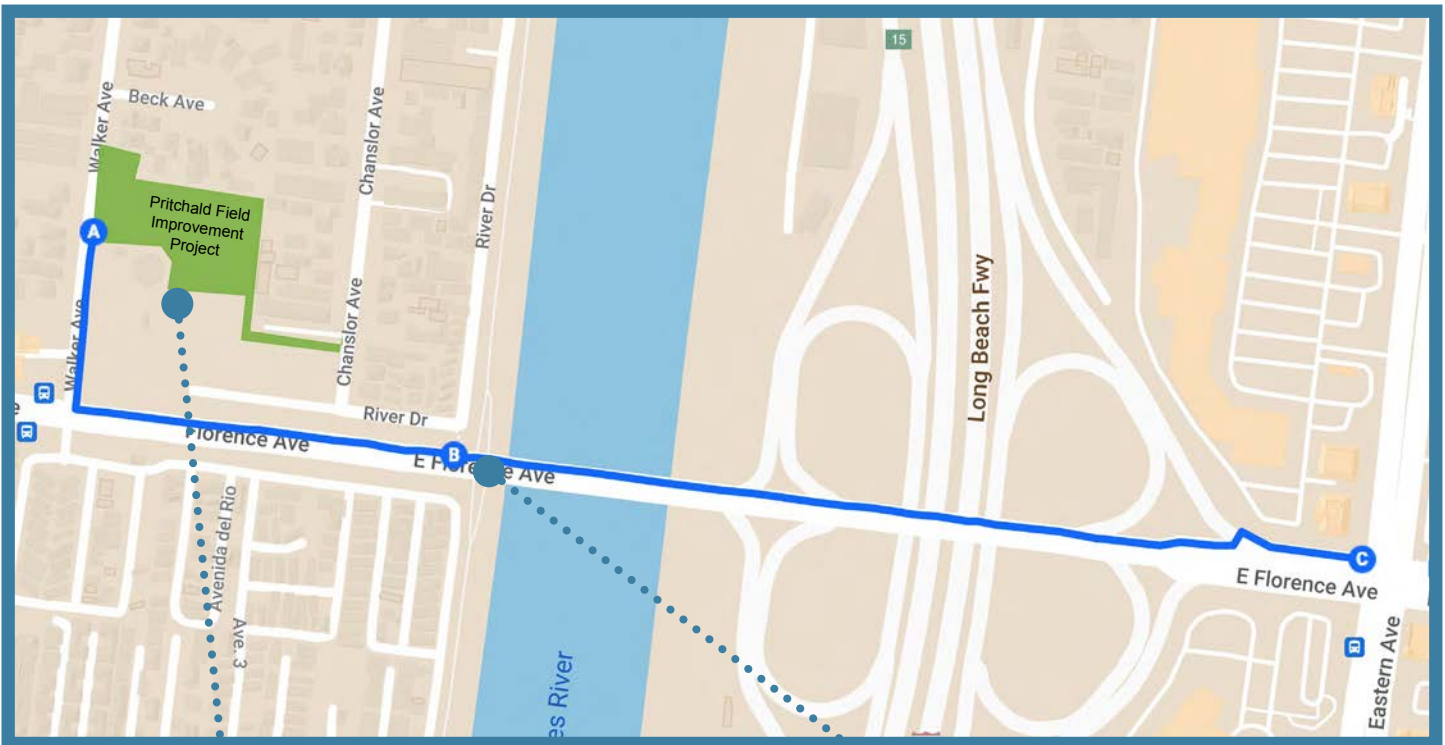
Figure 2: Bicycle Injury Crashes



 **Walking & Biking Assessments**

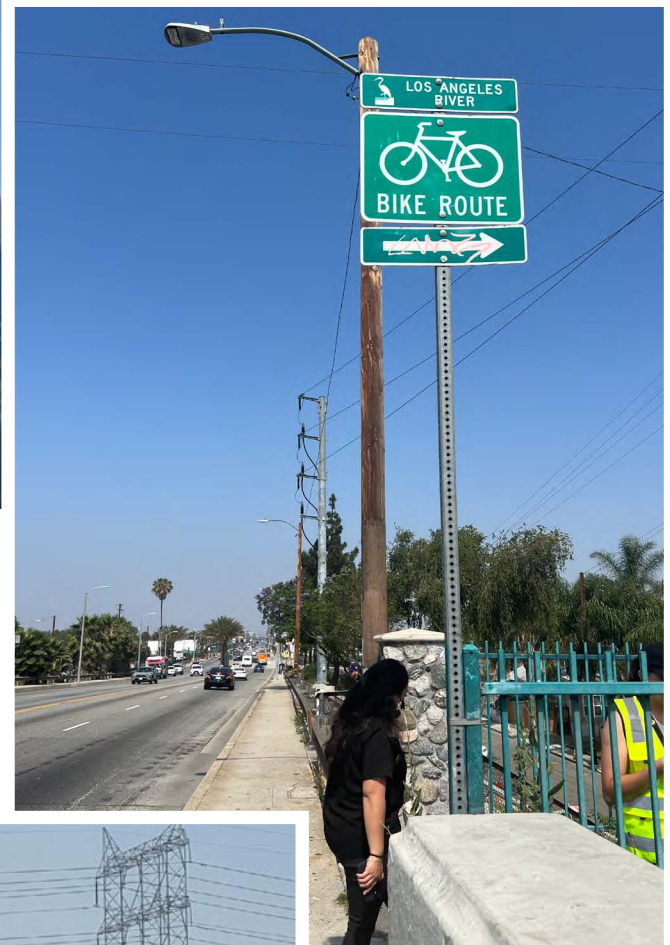
During the workshop, participants took part in a virtual walking and biking safety assessment along East Florence Avenue. East Florence Avenue is one of the main streets that will lead to the park and it's a connector to the LA River Trail. Participants were asked to identify community assets, assess infrastructure conditions, and share how road users engage with the built environment. The following is a summary of the walking and biking assessment focused on East Florence Avenue between Walker Avenue and Eastern Avenue.

East Florence Avenue Assets



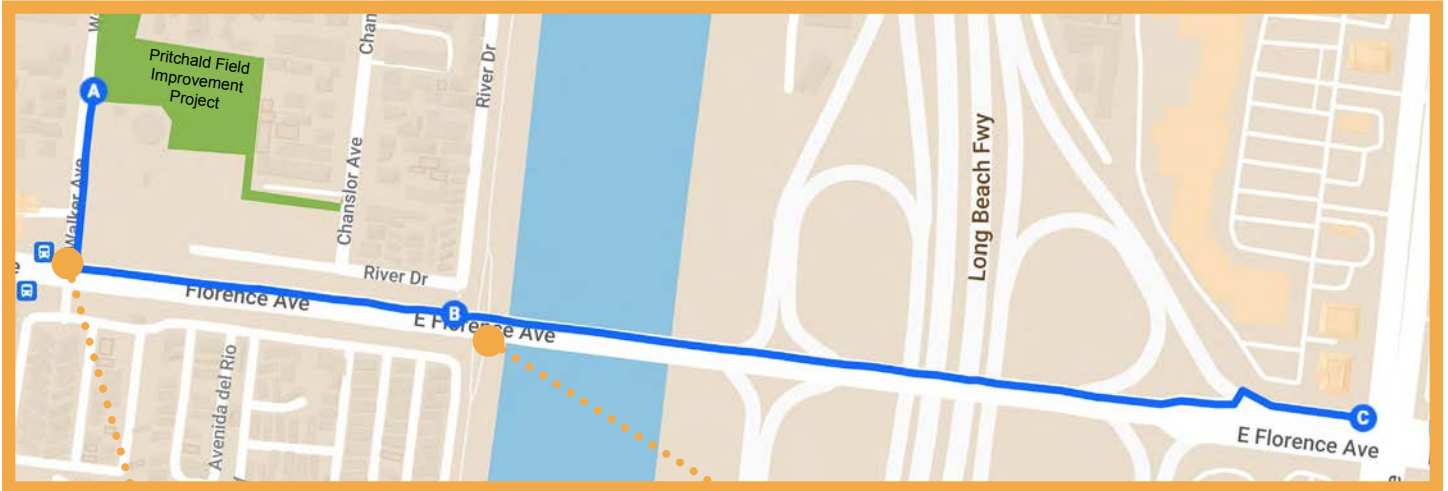
- The City of Bell received Proposition 68 funding to build a new park on what was formerly Pritchard Field. These improvements will rejuvenate the park and provide an open space for the surrounding communities.

- The LA River Trail is less than a quarter of a mile from the new park and provides a place for community residents to ride their bikes and walk safely.
- The LA River Trail has entry points on both the north and south sides of East Florence Avenue and provides a safe way for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross East Florence Avenue because there are no crosswalks between Walker Avenue and Eastern Avenue, a distance of about 0.5 miles.



Top: Signage for the new park outlines upcoming improvements and a rendering of the proposed park. Middle: The LA River Trail and the new park can both be points of interest for residents looking to do physical activities. Bottom: A pedestrian exiting from the LA River Trail on the northern side of East Florence Avenue.

East Florence Avenue Concerns



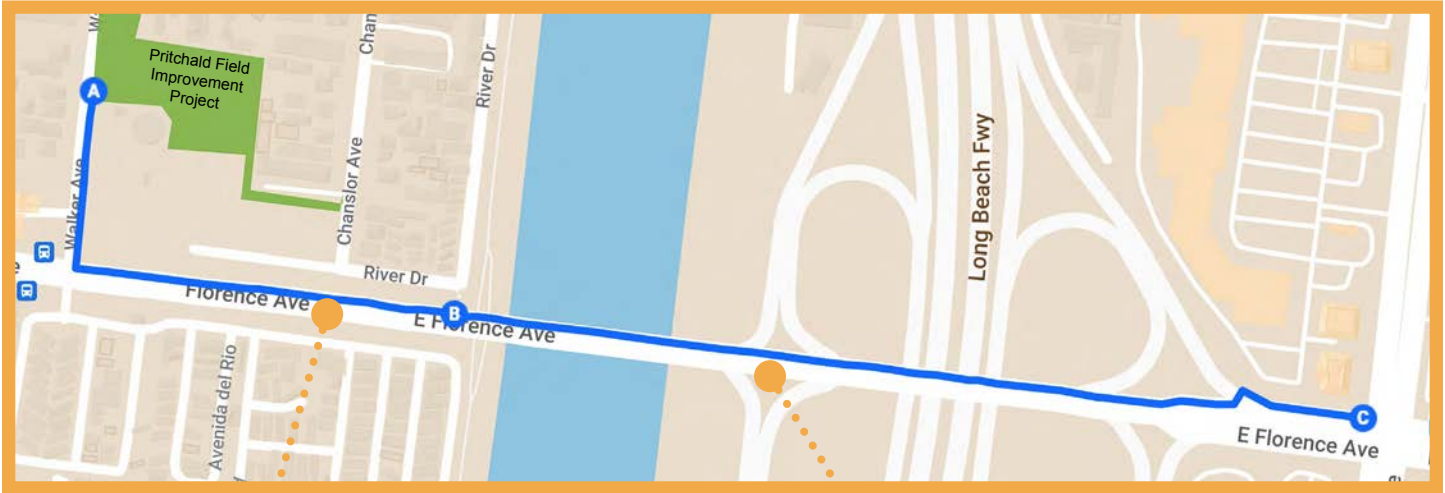
East Florence Avenue/Walker Avenue Intersection Challenges

- The short crossing time on all four legs of the East Florence Avenue/Walker Avenue intersection forces pedestrians to have to speed walk through which can be a hazard, especially for seniors, children, and people using assisted mobility devices.

LA River Trail Challenges

- Water from the LA River has a foul odor that makes it unpleasant for pedestrians walking through the area.
- There is limited shade and no water stations along the LA River Trail. This makes it difficult for people to travel along the trail during the summer months when it gets especially hot.

East Florence Avenue Concerns



Infrastructure Needs Along Florence Avenue

- The East Florence Avenue sidewalks are narrow, making it difficult for pedestrians to walk side by side or pass each other without entering the roadway. This is especially difficult for people walking with strollers and assisted mobility devices.
- There are no shade or resting places along East Florence Avenue heading towards Eastern Avenue, making getting around difficult, especially in the summer with hotter temperatures and more direct sunlight.
- There is no pedestrian-scale lighting along East Florence Avenue, and it gets too dark to walk safely at night.
- There are no bike lanes or sharrows on East Florence Avenue between Walker Avenue and Eastern Avenue. This forces bicyclists connecting from the LA River Trail to East Florence Avenue to either ride in a traffic lane alongside speeding drivers or bike on the sidewalk leaving no space for pedestrians to walk safely.

Safety Challenges Related to Interstate 710 On-Ramps

- Drivers speed above the posted speed limit along East Florence Avenue, especially as they enter and exit Interstate 710 on-ramps on East Florence Avenue. This makes it unsafe for bicyclists who are riding on the street causing near-misses. Additionally, drivers entering and exiting Interstate 710 at East Florence Avenue do not yield to pedestrians. Pedestrians often have to run to cross fast enough because drivers do not yield, putting themselves at risk while crossing.
- There is a lot of driver traffic on East Florence Avenue due to the number of drivers entering and exiting Interstate 710, which limits the space available for bicyclists on the road.



*Top: A pedestrian using the crosswalk at Interstate 710 has to cross quickly to avoid oncoming traffic.
Bottom: The exit from the LA River Trail onto East Florence Avenue does not have safety infrastructure in place for bicyclists, such as bike lanes or sidewalk ramps, which are needed because drivers speed and brake suddenly as is evident by the skid marks.*

*Top: The East Florence/
Walker Avenue intersection,
next to the new Bell park,
has standard marked
crosswalks and is four lanes
wide with short crossing
times.*



*Middle: A pedestrian walking
on the sidewalk with a
rolling cart leaves little room
for anyone else to use the
sidewalk next to them.*

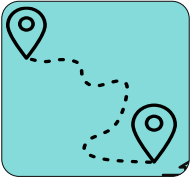


*Bottom: LA River trail
is extensive and has still
water that creates a foul
smell.*



Project Team Recommendations

The Project Team offers the community the following recommendations based on the community's walking and biking safety concerns and Safe System strategy priorities.



Safe Routes to Parks Program

The Project Team recommends the Planning Committee partner with the City of Bell to develop a [Safe Routes to Parks](#) (SRTP) program to identify the best routes to and from the new Bell park, including a connection to the LA River Trail. A SRTP program can help bring more people to the park by providing vetted safe ways for all road users to get to and from the park.

[The SRTP program](#) can kick off with the grand opening of the park. Wayfinding signage shows the designated safe routes and guides community residents to and from the park. Wayfinding can direct LA River Trail users to the park as a space for rest, water, and shade and let park users know they can use the trail to walk and ride their bikes. The City of Bell can make a call for submissions to design the signage and use the opportunity to engage more community. Resources such as the [Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities Grant](#) can be applied to support the development of this program.



Conduct a Lighting Assessment

The Project Team recommends the Planning Committee partner with the City of Bell Public Works Department to conduct an assessment of the lighting conditions on city streets near and around the LA River Trail. Improved street lighting can enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists due to the increased visibility between drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Improved street lighting can also help increase personal safety, especially that of women. A participant shared feeling unsafe walking due to sexual harassment experiences and stressed the need for better lighting in the area. The Planning Committee can reference the [US Federal Highway Administration's Pedestrian Lighting Primer](#) to understand how to assess current lighting conditions, how to design pedestrian-scale lighting, and how to implement pedestrian-scale lighting once the preferred design is chosen by the Public Works Department.



Creative Crosswalks

The Project Team recommends the Planning Committee work with the City of Bell Planning Department to design and install a [creative crosswalk](#) along the key intersection of East Florence Avenue/Walker Avenue, to encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians. [Creative crosswalks](#) provide a safe place to cross that is more visible to drivers. It is also more aesthetically pleasing and culturally relevant to the community and can help boost community pride. Creative crosswalks designs can be designed by students and community residents to build community and in this case, be something that connects to the theme of the new Bell park.



Safety Messaging Campaigns

The Project Team recommends the Planning Committee partner with the City of Bell to design a road safety campaign that provides safety messaging to reduce unsafe driver behaviors near the park, the LA River Trail, and Interstate 710 entrances and exits along East Florence Avenue. Safety messaging can be developed based on the top primary crash factors, which can be found in the crash data, to address the most common unsafe road user behaviors. Safety messaging should be developed with the community to reflect the community's culture and language needs. Once safety messaging has been developed, signage can be attached to street lights, utility boxes, bus stop posters, and as lawn sides. The City can explore the following funding opportunities for this project:

- [Caltrans' Active Transportation Program](#);
- [California Office of Traffic Safety's Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Grants](#); and
- Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG) [GoHuman Campaign](#).

Los Caminos de la Vía: Radionovela

During the training, participants created a Radionovela, a podcast that highlights community concerns and proposes solutions about pedestrian and bicycle safety around the new Bell park through the power of storytelling. This audio project is intended to be used as a tool for advocacy to create their local community visions for a healthy walkable and bikeable community. This episode and all past Camino de las Vía podcasts can be found on [Soundcloud](https://bit.ly/los-caminos-de-la-via) using the link: <https://bit.ly/los-caminos-de-la-via>. A transcript of the Radionovela can be found in the appendix of this report.

This episode highlights community residents' recommendations to create safe and comfortable access to the new Bell Park. Participants shared the need for additional improvements outside the park like pedestrian scale lighting, bike lanes, shade, and water stations to help with greater connectivity between the LA River and the new Bell park. This in turn would promote more active transportation and a more active community. To read a transcript of the audio, see Appendix A.

Visit <https://bit.ly/los-caminos-de-la-via> or scan the QR code to listen to the Bell Community Radionovela!



Appendix

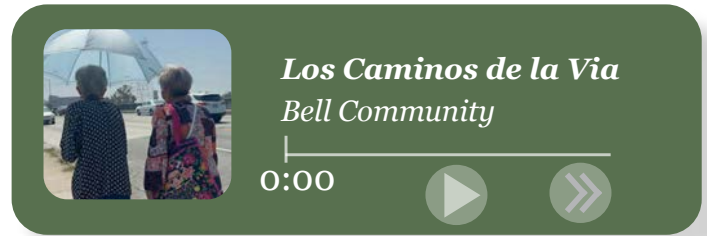
- [Transcript of Radionovela](#)
- [Review of Pedestrian and Bicycle Data of Bell, CA](#)

Radionovela Transcript

Bell has narrow sidewalks and no bike infrastructure on the road. Community residents recognize the need for bike infrastructure, such as bike lanes, but also culturally use the sidewalks to ride because of unsafe driver behavior, such as speeding. Suggested improvements by residents include strategies for both the road and the sidewalk. Read the translated transcript from the Spanish audio to learn about their walking and biking stories in the City of Bell.

- **What would make your community feel safer to walk or bike? What changes do you want to see in your community?**
- **Do you have a story or experience that shows why these changes are necessary?**
- **Who should be supporting and listening to these experiences?**
- **What would it take for others in your community to support this work?**

Bell community members answered the questions above to build their community narrative.



Narrator: Hello everyone, welcome to our new episode of Los Caminos de la Via. Los Caminos de la via is a project that came out of California Walks and UC Berkeley SafeTREC’s Comunidades Activas y Seguras (Active and Safe Communities) workshop. This program focuses on helping Spanish-speaking communities in California improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in their cities through the creation of audio content that can be used as a tool for advocacy and education. This mini-podcast highlights community concerns through storytelling. Help raise awareness of pedestrian and bicycle safety and propose community-led solutions. In today’s segment, we spoke to the community about the area around the intersection of East Florence Avenue and Walker Avenue, which is the location of a new park in the City of Bell.

Community: [Participant sharing about a community member’s reaction to the upcoming park] Inform everyone in the City of Bell, or those who are close, about the existence of the park because the gentlemen were moved when they gave him the brochure [about the workshop]; they said “wow, that’s good! It would be good for them to open it [the park] and take my children.

Narrator: This new park will soon be renovated thanks to Proposition 68 funds; the park’s renovation will include massive changes like playgrounds, restrooms, spaces to walk and exercise, and an area for pets. This park renovation will give the Bell community a space to be active. They are very excited about the new park that is coming. The Bell community recognizes that the conditions of the routes to the park are not the best and ask that the city also take note of the following conditions around the park.

Community: Well, what is very unsafe is that the sidewalks are too small for pedestrians to pass. Pedestrians and bicyclists cannot use the sidewalk [together] and [also] people with wheelchairs do not fit. The sidewalks are very, very narrow.

Narrator: The City of Bell is a majority Latino community in the southeastern part of Los Angeles County. 15% of Bell residents do not own a car, and nearly 1/10 of the community walked or took public transportation to work. Residents rely on public transportation, walking or carpooling to get around the neighborhood even if they are uncomfortable due to safety issues such as speeding drivers, narrow sidewalks, and proximity to freeways.

Community: It's very difficult for people to use bicycles because we don't have protection in the first place. We are from a community that does not have a piece on the road [no bike infrastructure to be able to ride on the road]; for bicycles, that is, there is no security; you have to use the sidewalk.

Narrator: Between 2016 and 2020 there were 89 pedestrian crashes and 50 bicycle crashes, ranking sixth out of 94 cities with similar population sizes for people killed or injured. Bell ranked seven out of 94 for speed-related crashes and two out of 94 for night-time crashes, confirming community concerns related to speed and lighting.

Community: [The new park] it's close to the freeway. There is a lot of traffic, many cars go very fast and do not respect pedestrians. When the light changes, many turn and do not wait. People

[pedestrians] always rush to get across and hope they get seen. People have to be vigilant all around because there is too much traffic. To cross the part of the freeway [crosswalks at the freeway entrances and exits] is also new; it is very unsafe. You see all the cars coming out of the freeway; the only thing there are some lines painted on the ground. There is no light or something that helps people to be safer when crossing.

"It's very difficult for people to use bicycles because we don't have protection in the first place. [...] [The new park] it's close to the freeway. There is a lot of traffic, many cars go very fast and do not respect pedestrians."

Narrator: The community shares what improvements would help to have a safe route to the new park and what could help connect it to other cities in southeast Los Angeles.

Community: If they put more lighting by the park I think it would be good, because there are days in autumn where it gets darker, earlier, and people, well, at this time, they are afraid to go for a walk. If there were more light,

if the park was more lit, then the people would already have more confidence in going out for a walk. We need street lights that are not so high up because the very high ones do not illuminate [where people walk], so they have to be lowered to an adequate level so that they illuminate the entire street [beyond where cars are]. I would ask them to stretch the sidewalks a little wider so that people who walk or bicycle are safer. I would also ask for there to be a bus stop because there are people who do not own a car; if there was a bus stop nearby or a DASH or something like that would be good. Also, a sign saying here's a little park, come and rest or come, enjoy the park and rest a little.

Narrator: For the community this new park is a good step that will open the doors to a more active

community. They recognize that the new park is just the beginning and to have a complete park it needs safe routes to the park from all over the community. The community wants to be able to use this park as an example that can be replicated in other areas of southeast Los Angeles.

Community: We realized that we need more green space throughout SELA [Southeast LA] so people have more confidence in going to the park to walk. We need the community to be informed because even though we already know and some people who live nearby have already realized that the park is going to be built, many other people don't know. I hope this park is the park that other cities recognize.

Narrator: The community around it is full of residents who are ready to continue advocating for safer routes to the park. AltaMed and SELA Health Allies will continue to work together to ensure there are safe routes to this new park so the community can truly enjoy and be active. Thanks for joining us, and be sure to listen to the rest of the Caminos de la Via episodes. We invite you to read Bell's executive summary at the link in the description. To learn more about Comunidades Activas y Seguras (Active and Safe Communities) visit the California Walks and UC Berkeley SafeTREC website. Until next time!

Visit

<https://bit.ly/los-caminos-de-la-via>

or scan the QR code to listen to the Bell Community Radionovela!



Review of Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Data in Bell, CA

Comunidades Activas y Seguras (Safe and Active Communities)



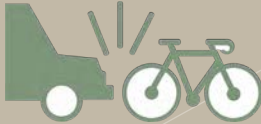
¿What is a pedestrian crash?



- A crash between a pedestrian and a motor-vehicle. It includes a person on foot, skateboard, stroller, in wheelchair, electric assisted mobility device
- A crash can result in multiple injuries



What is a cyclist crash?



- A crash between a bicyclist and a motor-vehicle
- Bicycles are considered vehicles and therefore the violations committed by a "driver" could have been committed by a motor vehicle driver or by a cyclist.



Pedestrian Crashes (2016-2020) per year



Pedestrian Crashes 2016-2020

The crashes were concentrated along:

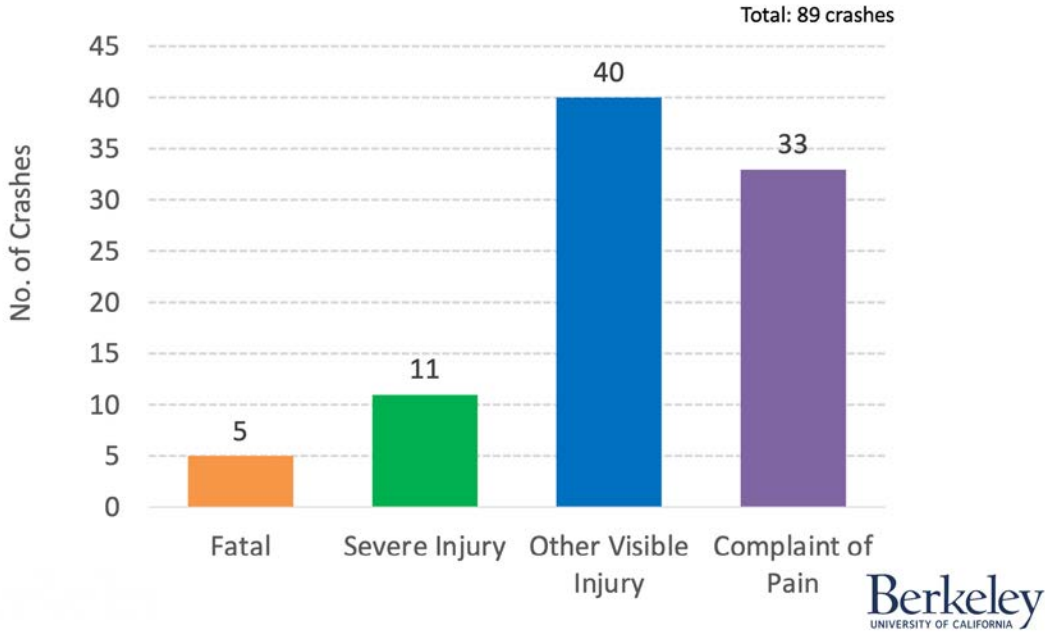
- Florence Avenue (26 Crashes)
- Gage Avenue (24 Crashes)

Fatal pedestrian crashes occurred at the following intersections:

- Gage Avenue/ Otis Avenue
- Florence Avenue/ Atlantic Avenue

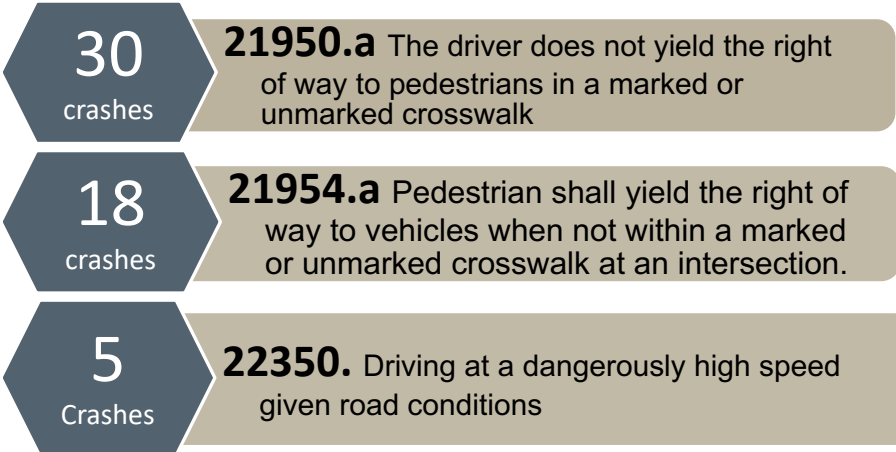


Pedestrian Crashes (2016-2020) by Severity of Injury



Pedestrian crashes (2016-2020)

most frequently cited violations

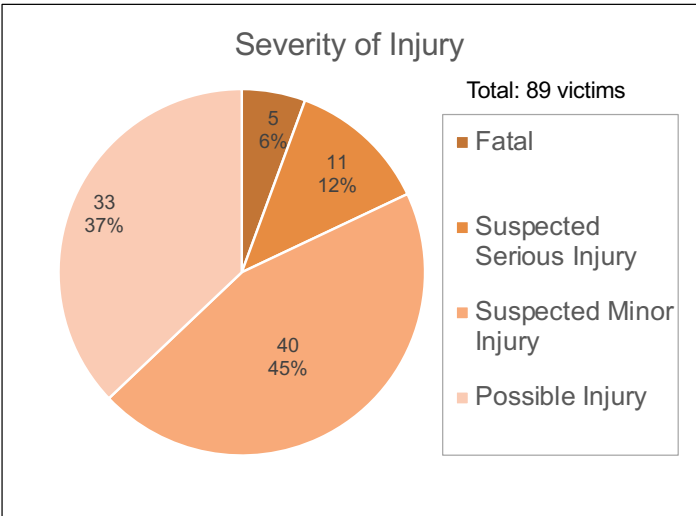


Pedestrian Crash Victims

by severity of injury

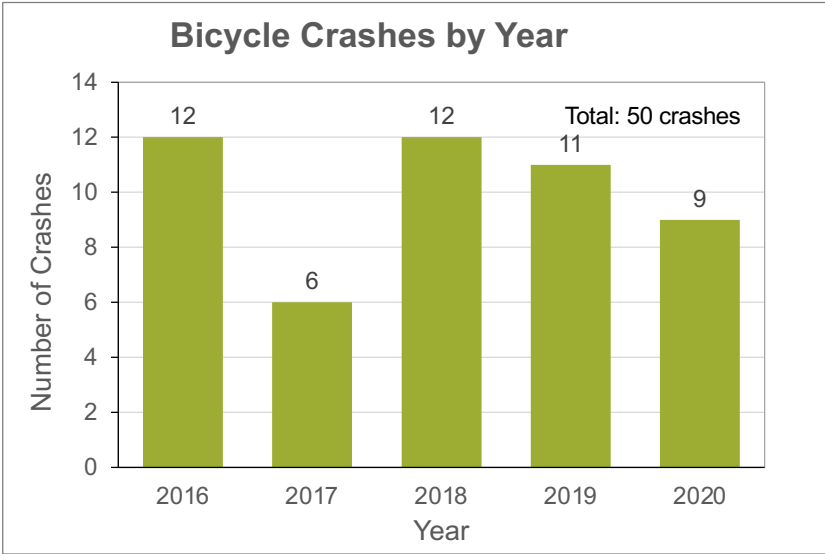
89 pedestrian victims were injured in 89 pedestrian crashes

- There were 16 fatal or serious injury victims.



Bicycle Crashes (2016-2020)

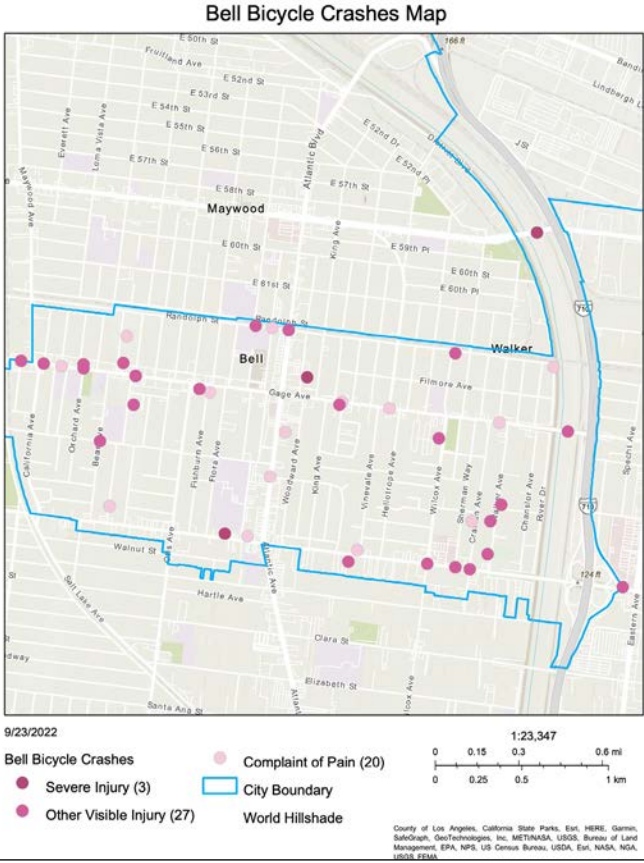
per year



Bicycle Crashes 2016-2020

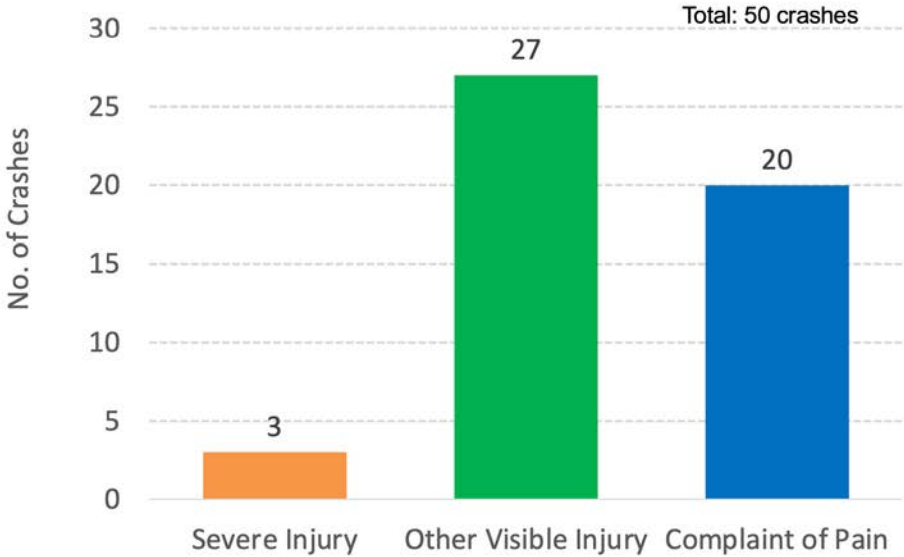
The crashes were concentrated along:

- Gage Avenue (5 Crashes)
- Florence Avenue (11 crashes) Including a crash at the entrance of 710-N
- One of three bicyclist crashes that resulted in serious injuries occurred on Florence Avenue.



Bicycle Crashes (2016-2020)

by severity of injury

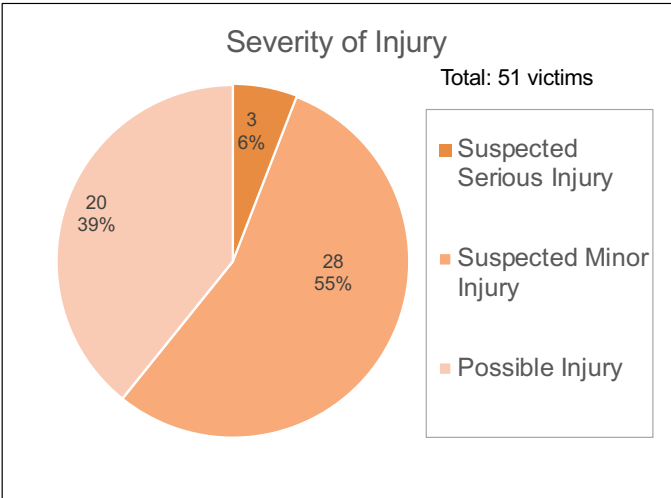


Bicycle Crash Victims (2016-2020)

by severity of injury

51 bicycle victims were injured in 51 bicycle crashes

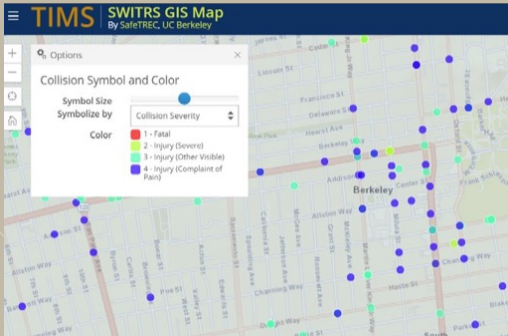
- There were 3 victims with serious injuries.



Street Story

Street Story is a tool for gathering community feedback on transportation safety issues. Share stories in Street Story of where you've been in a crash or near-miss, or where you feel safe or unsafe traveling.

<https://streetstory.berkeley.edu>



Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS)

TIMS is a web-based tool that allows users to analyze and map data from the California Integrated System of State Traffic Records (SWITRS). To further explore collision data, sign up for a free account to access TIMS tools and resources.

<https://tims.berkeley.edu>





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*To learn more about the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle
Safety Program visit UC Berkeley SafeTREC's site
<https://safetrec.berkeley.edu> or California Walks' site
<https://www.calwalks.org/comunidades-activas-y-seguras>.*